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DE RUEHLM #0135/01 0361218  
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7654  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0729  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7718  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5899  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4244  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1819  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4253  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3349  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8323  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5814  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0530  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2609  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000135

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, DS/IP/SCA, DS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: SPIKE IN DEADLY ATTACKS CONTINUES TO  
TARGET CIVILIANS

REF: COLOMBO 0114

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Sri Lanka experienced a spike in terrorist attacks prior to its February Independence Day celebrations. On February 2, a bomb exploded on a civilian bus in Dambulla, in north central Sri Lanka, killing 20. On February 3, an LTTE suicide cadre killed herself and 14 others at the Fort Railway Station in Colombo. On February 4, a claymore mine hit a civilian bus in Sri Lanka's East, killing 15 and a second claymore mine hit an army vehicle in the South, killing one soldier. Several other smaller attacks also occurred over the weekend. In response, the government has closed most Colombo area schools for the remainder of the week, although not international schools that US Embassy dependents attend. While the larger attacks appear to be the work of the LTTE, it is less clear who is responsible for the smaller blasts. The Embassy issued a strong statement on February 3 condemning the attacks. End summary.

LTTE Attacks Target Civilians and Army  
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12. (U) On February 2 at 7:00 am, a parcel bomb planted on a civilian bus killed 20 and injured over 50. The bus was headed from Kandy to Anuradhapura and was carrying passengers on their way to a Buddhist religious festival. Police spokesperson N.K. Illangakoon said police were investigating two passengers who boarded the bus in Matale and got off just 15 km before Dambulla, where the blast occurred.

13. (U) On February 3 at 2:15 pm, an LTTE female suicide cadre blew herself up on Platform 3 of the Fort Railway Station in Colombo. Fourteen persons were killed and 103 were injured. The suicide bomber reportedly blew herself up after being stopped by security personnel conducting a random search of the station. Police say she may have arrived at the station on the train from Medawachchiya (roughly 35 km from the crossing point into the Vanni at Omantai), which arrived just a few minutes before the blast. There was slight damage to the carriage of a train waiting to depart

for Ambepussa.

¶4. (U) On February 4 at 3:40 pm, a claymore mine exploded hitting a civilian bus in Welioya in North Central Province. Fifteen people were killed and 17 injured. The bomb was attached to a roadside tree and detonated using a remote control device. Defense Ministry officials have blamed the LTTE.

¶5. (U) On February 4, a claymore mine exploded hitting a Sri Lankan Army truck on the road from Kataragama to Buttala. One soldier was killed and three were injured.

#### Several Smaller Attacks

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¶6. (U) On February 3, a grenade exploded in a trash can at the Dehiwela Zoo, in the southern part of Colombo, injuring 7 people. On February 4, a grenade exploded in a garbage dump in Moratuwa, 2 checkpoints were destroyed in Ampara, and 4 home guards were killed in Yala.

#### Government Closes Schools

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¶7. (U) The Ministry of Education announced on February 4 that government and government-supported private schools in Colombo (comprising about 40 institutions), will be closed for the remainder of the week, citing the volatile security situation. (Note: The Overseas School of Colombo, which most Embassy children attend, and other international schools were not closed.) MTV news announced today that North

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Central Province schools will be closed indefinitely.

¶8. (C) The EAC met today (septel) to assess the spike in violence over the weekend and its implications for official Americans and American citizens. On February 3, the Embassy issued a press statement which was widely carried by local media.

STATEMENT TEXT: The United States strongly condemns the terrorist attacks on February 3 at Fort Railway Station and Dehiwela Zoo in Colombo, and on February 2 on a bus in Dambulla. We offer our condolences to the victims, and their families. These reprehensible acts, which bear all the hallmarks of the LTTE, clearly targeted innocent civilians to foster an atmosphere of fear prior to Sri Lanka's Independence Day celebrations.

We appeal urgently to all parties to the conflict to take every possible measure to avoid killing or injuring civilians. Only a political solution to the country's conflict that responds to the aspirations of Sri Lanka's Tamil and other communities offers a way out of the current cycle of escalating violence. END TEXT.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: The 4 larger attacks (paras 2 through 5) appear consistent with known LTTE methods and objectives. It is less clear who is responsible for the smaller attacks. Media contacts tell us the minor attacks are efforts by the LTTE to keep up pressure on the government by stirring up public unrest. Nonetheless, we doubt the LTTE would bother to blow up dumps and trash cans. The closing of schools is a move by the government to ensure that children do not become the victims of LTTE attacks in the South. It may also be an attempt to manage the public's reaction to the worsening security situation by showing that the government is taking all prudent measures. While terrorist attacks by the LTTE and others will likely stiffen the resolve of the Sinhalese majority to support the government's war effort in the short to medium term, lengthy and indeterminate school closures will not be acceptable to the public in the long run. Although the spate of deadly attacks this weekend was timed to coincide with Sri Lanka's February 4 Independence Day

celebrations, as the GSL continues to pursue its military campaign in the North, further violence by the LTTE directed at the civilian population is a virtual certainty.

BLAKE